



# National Brownfields Assessment Pilot *State of Rhode Island*

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Between 1995 and 1996, EPA funded 76 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. EPA is funding more than 27 Pilots in 1997. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

## BACKGROUND

EPA selected the State of Rhode Island for a Brownfields Pilot. The State is focusing its project on communities in the watersheds of the Woonasquatucket and Blackstone Rivers. Decades of industrial use have left many properties contaminated, which led to under-use, vacancy, and decay at these sites. There are 50 brownfields sites in the watersheds, but inventories of contaminated sites are incomplete and not cross-referenced with development potential. Sites not on the State's inventory may pose threats to the health of surrounding communities. The stigma of possible contamination has affected local economies and impeded implementation of a major project to create a greenway along the Woonasquatucket River.

## OBJECTIVES

The State is developing a model ecosystem-based program to return to beneficial use vacant or under-used contaminated properties in the communities. A key to the success of the State's approach will be coordinating revitalization efforts being conducted by multiple State and local agencies in these watersheds. The State strategy is to provide: 1) a degree of certainty in the level of contamination that

### PILOT SNAPSHOT



*State of Rhode Island*

**Date of Award:**  
June 1996

**Amount:** \$200,000

**Site Profile:** The Pilot targets sites within the watersheds of the Woonasquatucket and Blackstone Rivers. The watersheds contain 50 known brownfields.

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will allow accurate estimates of cleanup costs; and 2) to leverage additional resources, support, or assistance for addressing brownfields.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot has:

- Conducted a regional survey of both ecosystems in the watershed, identifying 50 preliminary brownfields sites for further assessment;
- Completed 50 Phase I environmental assessments;
- Conducted roundtable meetings of all stakeholders to prioritize 20 of the 50 sites based on Phase I site assessments, community concerns, potential beneficial reuse, and environmental threat; and
- Conducted Phase II site assessments at two of the 20 priority sites to identify the nature and extent of contamination.

The Pilot is:

- Conducting Phase II site assessments at other priority sites in the target area. Work plans have been completed for two additional site assessments and field work is expected to be initiated in the Spring of 1997;
- Conducting Phase II investigative work at the former H&H Screw property. The work is expected to begin this quarter and may involve a cooperative environmental assessment effort between the Pilot and the prospective purchaser; and
- Working with other communities within the watershed to identify additional high priority sites.

## LEVERAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES

Experience with the State of Rhode Island Pilot has been a catalyst for related activities including the following.

- Constructed four monitoring wells on the Collyer Wire Building site in the Town of Lincoln. The prospective purchaser installed the monitoring wells

and the Pilot agreed to pay for the analytical testing. This cost-sharing by the prospective purchaser reflects confidence in the Brownfields Program.

- Cleaned up a spill from a leaking underground storage tank on the Lincoln Lace and Braid site following a complaint that the Woonasquatucket River was being contaminated. The Coast Guard contained the spill and removed approximately 23,000 gallons of #4 fuel oil and water from the site.
- The City of Providence, in cooperation with a non-profit corporation The Providence Plan, is negotiating purchase of the six-acre Riverside Mills site. The City would like to include the site as a bike path in the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project.
- The City of Woonsocket has applied for grants to purchase and develop the Narragansett Knitting site. The City is considering developing the site into an incubator for high tech projects. An adjacent building also suspected of contamination has recently been purchased by a developer. The Pilot is investigating the possibility of sharing costs of environmental investigation.